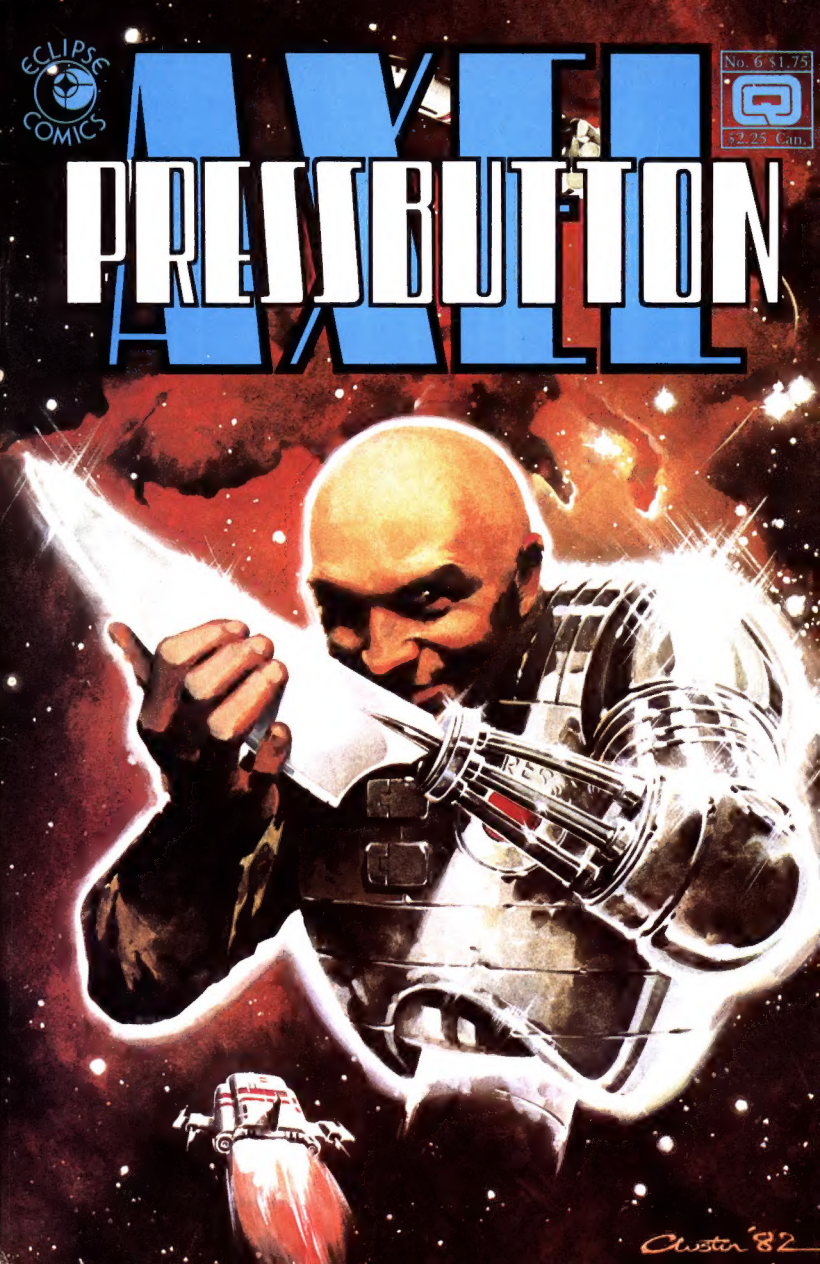
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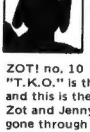

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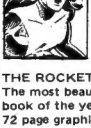

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. . . **HOW TIMES SLIPS AWAY:** Not too many years ago — sometime in this very decade, to be exact — i used to be a writer. I wrote and wrote, all sorts of expository and critical stuff, from mid-afternoon until the wee, wee hours. I wrote so much because i had to write so much to earn a living for myself and my daughter. People said i was prolific, but no matter how fast i wrote, i was just one step ahead of the welfare lines.

After a while i found that i made better money and had a lot more fun when i was writing about popular culture, especially comic books. So i began to devote myself full-time to writing for The Buyer's Guide, and the situation was made very easy for me because of the liberal payments and genuine friendship offered by TBG's editor, Alan Light.

I used to write a column called Fit to Print, and most of the time it did and it was. I wrote it four days a week, and on the other days i began to pick up freelance work as an editor of comic strip and book reprints. That was fun too, because of the liberal payments and genuine friendship offered by my two steadiest employers, Ken Pierce and Denis Kitchen.

But most of all i was a writer.

Somehow, little by little, a little later, i began to spend more time editing. When Alan sold the Buyer's Guide to its present owner, i began to write less often, and to write a bit less each time i wrote.

I still needed money, though, and with the simple logic of necessity to drive me, i took on more editing work.

Today i am an editor, and that is fine. But just a while ago, looking through some old TBGs to find an illo i had drawn, i happened to stop a moment to read what i had written when i was a writer.

I missed myself.

I used to write about anything susceptible to thought: comics, old movies, rock'n'roll, sex, religion, politics, love, fear, and a death or two. I used long words like "propinquity" and "parenthetical" whenever i wanted to. I was free as air.

Well, as i said, today i am an editor. I have plot conferences. I assign scripts to artists. I proofread and copy-edit manuscripts. I fix up art errors and check colour proofs. I answer the phone (oh boy, do i ever!) and yes, i write ad copy, hype, blurbs, taglines and press releases.

Whole days go by in which i write nothing more than notes to the engraver (a warm, friendly man named Gary whom i have never met, and who even now is wondering if this page — "cover two" in his vocabulary — will make it in on time).

"Dear Gary," i scribble, "Shoot these @ 60% and rush greylines to Steve Oliff." Or, "Gary, there's an air bubble in the colour overlay (pantone film): burnish it before scanning and if necessary clean it out of the final film. Thanks!"

This kind of thing isn't writing.

Neither is it writing when i put together a press release or an ad.

Even what you see here on this page is not writing. It is the memory of writing and an example of the effects of time. It will also serve as a reminder to myself and a notice of intent to you, dear reader:

The Penumbra may be a small space, but it is all mine, and in it i intend to write.

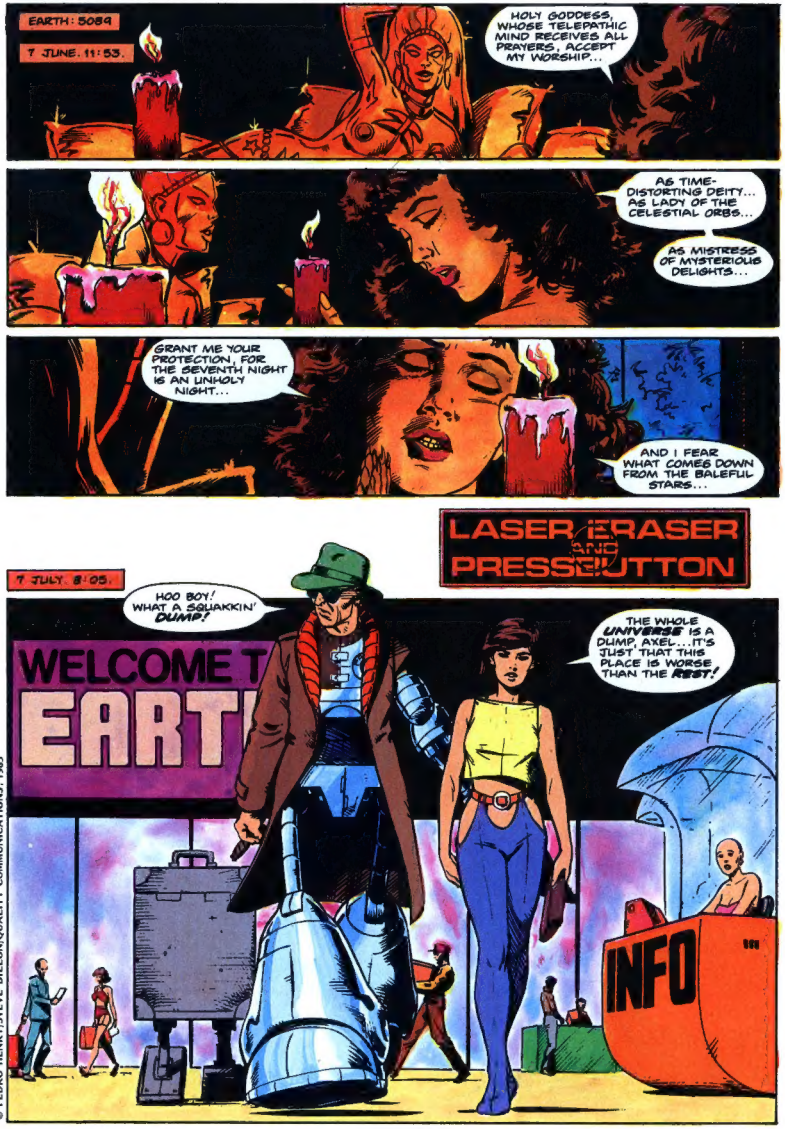
Stay tuned.

cat yronwode

IN YOUR HANDS

HEY! Somebody finally won the "Who is Pedro Henry?" contest we began back in March! Mikel Norwitz of 4949 East Shaw Butte, Scottsdale, Arizona 85254 knows the true name of the man who writes the adventures of your favourite cyborg-assassin duo. Mikel wins a six-issue subscription to keep him silent. . . so let's join "Pedro Henry" and the crew as they lead Mysta and Axel into another fine mess. . .

PRESSBUTTON no. 6, July 1985. Published by Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 199, Guerneville, CA 95446. Dez Skinn and Pedro Henry, Editors. Catherine Yronwode, Editor-in-Chief. Dean Mullaney, Publisher. Pressbutton TM and stories © 1985 Pedro Henry. Art © the respective artists. All other material © 1985 Eclipse Comics. Package © Eclipse and Quality. The stories, characters, events and places in this magazine are entirely fictional. Printed in Canada.


EARTH: 5089
7 JUNE. 11:53.
HOLY GODDESS, WHOSE TELEPATHIC MIND RECEIVES ALL PRAYERS, ACCEPT MY WORSHIP...
AS TIME-DISTORTING DEITY... AS LADY OF THE CELESTIAL ORBS...
AS MISTRESS OF MYSTERIOUS DELIGHTS...
GRANT ME YOUR PROTECTION, FOR THE SEVENTH NIGHT IS AN UNHOLY NIGHT...
AND I FEAR WHAT COMES DOWN FROM THE BALEFUL STARS...
LASER ERASER AND PRESSBUTTON
7 JULY. 8:05.
HOO BOY! WHAT A SQUAKKIN' DUMP!
THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS A DUMP, AXEL... IT'S JUST THAT THIS PLACE IS WORSE THAN THE REST!
WELCOME T
EARTH
INFO

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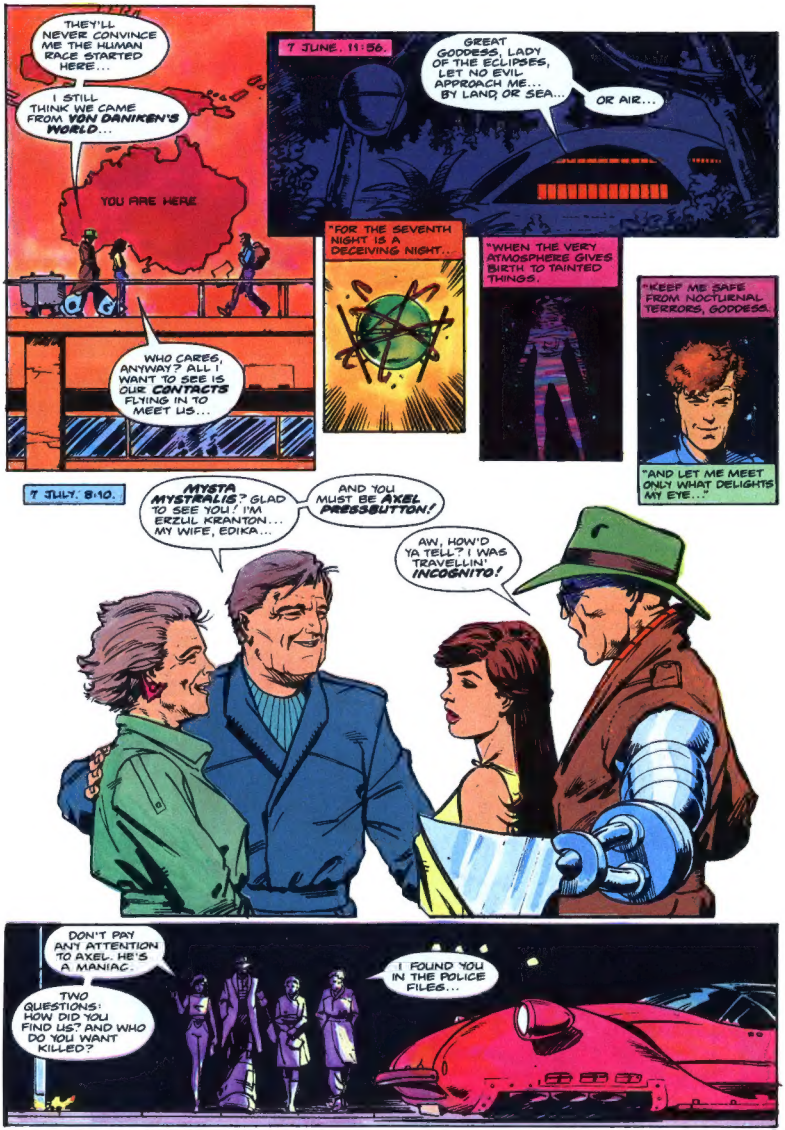
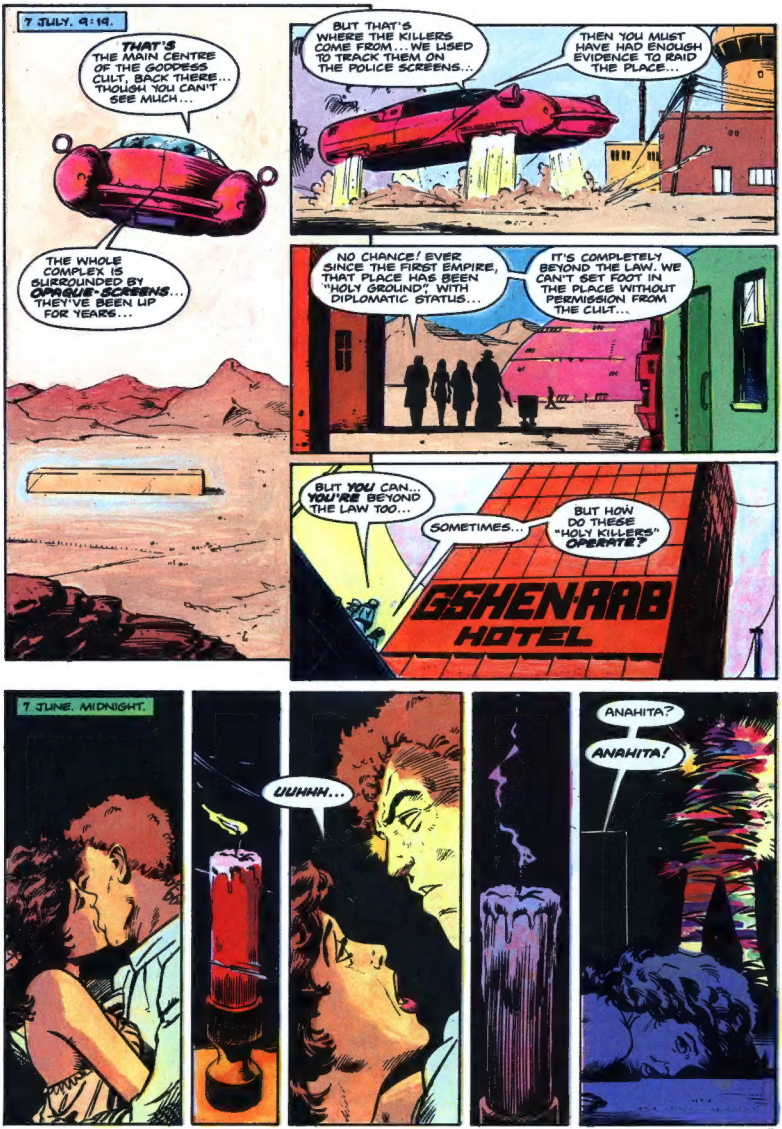

THEY'LL NEVER CONVINCE ME THE HUMAN RACE STARTED HERE...
I STILL THINK WE CAME FROM VON DANIKEN'S WORLD...
YOU ARE HERE
WHO CARES, ANYWAY? ALL I WANT TO SEE IS OUR CONTACTS FLYING IN TO MEET US...
7 JUNE. 11:56.
GREAT GODDESS, LADY OF THE ECLIPSES, LET NO EVIL APPROACH ME... BY LAND OR SEA...
OR AIR...
"FOR THE SEVENTH NIGHT IS A DECEIVING NIGHT..
"WHEN THE VERY ATMOSPHERE GIVES BIRTH TO TAINTED THINGS.
"KEEP ME SAFE FROM NOCTURNAL TERRORS, GODDESS.
"AND LET ME MEET ONLY WHAT DELIGHTS MY EYE..."
7 JULY. 8:10.
MYSTA MYSTRALIS? GLAD TO SEE YOU! I'M ERZUL KRANTON... MY WIFE, EDIKA...
AND YOU MUST BE AXEL PRESSBUTTON!
AW, HOW'D YA TELL? I WAS TRAVELLIN' INCOGNITO!
DON'T PAY ANY ATTENTION TO AXEL. HE'S A MANIAC.
TWO QUESTIONS: HOW DID YOU FIND US? AND WHO DO YOU WANT KILLED?
I FOUND YOU IN THE POLICE FILES...

YOU'RE A COP?
USED TO BE. BUT DON'T WORRY... YOU'RE ONLY WANTED IN THE ORMUZ SECTOR. NOT HERE...
ANYWAY, I RESIGNED WHEN I REALISED THE FORCE COULDN'T TOUCH MY LITTLE GIRL'S MURDERERS...
THEY'RE THE ONES I WANT KILLED.
YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW A LOT ABOUT EARTH... IT'S A BIT OF A BACKWATER THESE DAYS...
WHEN THE RESOURCES RAN OUT, MOST OF THE POPULATION LEFT... ALL WE'VE GOT NOW IS RELIGION...
AN ANCIENT CULT FROM THE FIRST EMPIRE OR BEFORE. WORSHIPPING "THE GODDESS"...
OLD BOMBAY
CONDEMNED AREA
KEEP OUT!
7 JUNE. 11:58.
PROL?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, PROL? I'M WORSHIPPING...
THEN I'LL JOIN YOU, ANA DARLING...
AFTER ALL, IF YOUR HEART'S WITH THE GODDESS, EVERYTHING'S AN ACT OF WORSHIP...
EVERYTHING? EVEN...


7 JULY. 9:19.
THAT'S THE MAIN CENTRE OF THE GODDESS CULT, BACK THERE... THOUGH YOU CAN'T SEE MUCH...
THE WHOLE COMPLEX IS SURROUNDED BY OPAQUE-SCREENS... THEY'VE BEEN UP FOR YEARS...
BUT THAT'S WHERE THE KILLERS COME FROM... WE USED TO TRACK THEM ON THE POLICE SCREENS...
THEN YOU MUST HAVE HAD ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO RAID THE PLACE...
NO CHANCE! EVER SINCE THE FIRST EMPIRE, THAT PLACE HAS BEEN "HOLY GROUND" WITH DIPLOMATIC STATUS...
IT'S COMPLETELY BEYOND THE LAW. WE CAN'T SET FOOT IN THE PLACE WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE CULT...
BUT YOU CAN... YOU'RE BEYOND THE LAW TOO...
SOMETIMES...
BUT HOW DO THESE "HOLY KILLERS" OPERATE?
GSHEN-RAB HOTEL
7 JUNE. MIDNIGHT.
UUHHH...
ANAHITA?
ANAHITA!

NO...NOT MY LITTLE ANAHITA...
KLIK!
LIFE-LEECH!
7 JULY. 4:38.
THAT'S WHAT KILLED MY DAUGHTER... THAT'S WHAT WE'VE TRACKED TO THE GODDESS-CULT...
IT'S SOME SORT OF MECHANISM THAT CAN GENERATE A CONSTRUCT-BODY OF ELECTROPLASM...
BUT TELEPATHICALLY, IT PICKS OUT WHOEVER'S DEAREST TO ITS VICTIM... LOVER, PARENT, CHILD...
THE RESEMBLANCE IS PERFECT, BUT AS SOON AS THEY TOUCH...
IT SUCKS THE LIFE OUT OF THE VICTIM IN ABOUT FIVE SECONDS FLAT!
THAT'S SICK! HELL, THAT'S SICKER THAN I AM!
LET'S GET IN THERE AND RIP A FEW LUNGS OUT!
HOLD ON, AXEL... WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'D BE GETTING INTO BEHIND THOSE OPAQUE-SCREENS...
THERE MIGHT BE THOUSANDS OF PRIESTS... ARE WE SUPPOSED TO KILL THEM ALL?

WE NEED TIME TO PLAN... TO RECONNOITRE...TO GATHER INFORMATION...
WE'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT WE THINK WHEN WE'VE SLEPT ON IT...
7 JULY. 11:59.
"THE SEVENTH NIGHT...
BZZT!
"...IS AN UNHOLY NIGHT..."
7 JULY. MIDNIGHT.

CONTINUED IN THIS ISSUE!

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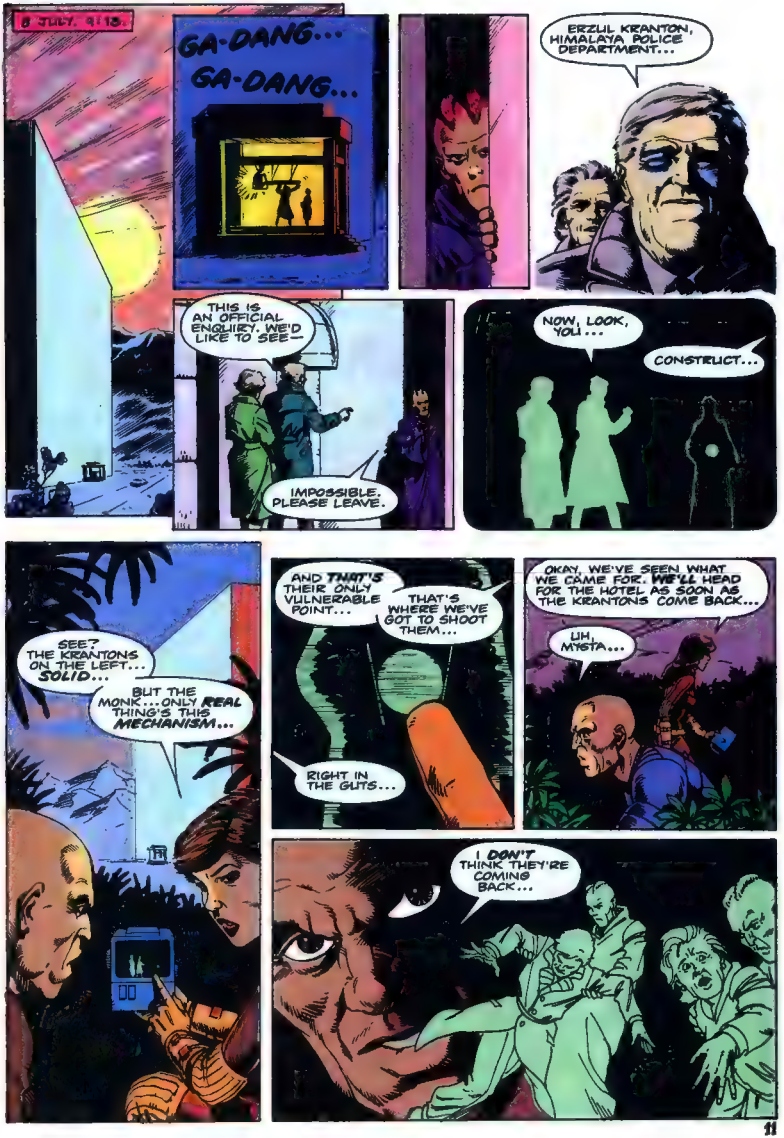
AXEL...
UH... SQUAK OFF, YA...
HUH? MYSTA?
VISITOR?
WAS...
GODDESS-WORSHIPPER BY THE LOOK OF IT... OR HIRED BY THEM...
VICIOUS BUNCHA BOZOS...
GOT WHAT WAS COMING TO HIM, THOUGH...
MAYBE, AXEL... MAYBE...
STUN PISTOL...
STUPID.
SO WHAT NOW?
LET'S GO BACK TO BED.


8 JULY, 9115.
GA-DANG...
GA-DANG...
ERZLIL KRANTON, HIMALAYA POLICE DEPARTMENT...
THIS IS AN OFFICIAL ENQUIRY. WE'D LIKE TO SEE—
IMPOSSIBLE. PLEASE LEAVE.
NOW, LOOK, YOU...
CONSTRUCT...
SEE? THE KRANTONS ON THE LEFT... SOLID...
BUT THE MONK...ONLY REAL THING'S THIS MECHANISM...
AND THAT'S THEIR ONLY VULNERABLE POINT...
THAT'S WHERE WE'VE GOT TO SHOOT THEM...
RIGHT IN THE GUTS...
OKAY, WE'VE SEEN WHAT WE CAME FOR. WE'LL HEAD FOR THE HOTEL AS SOON AS THE KRANTONS COME BACK...
UH, MYSTA...
I DON'T THINK THEY'RE COMING BACK...

8 JULY. 11:07
FIGURED WE'D END UP GOING IN...
SURE. IF WE DON'T GET THE KRANTONS OUT... NOBODY PAYS US...
RIGHT, SKIMMERS SET TO FLY DOWN TO THE MAIN GATE AND WAIT FOR US...
GOT YOUR AIR-SHOES?
AIR-SHOES? NAH...
NEVER BOTHER WITH THE THINGS...
AXEL?
GREAT... CAN'T SEE WHERE HE LANDED BECAUSE OF THE OPAQUE-SCREEN...
JUST HAVE TO LOOK OUT FOR THE RUBBLE, I GUESS...

EXCEPT IT'S ALL RUBBLE... DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANYONE'S LIVED HERE FOR YEARS...
AXEL?
DOWN HERE, SWEETHEART... BUILDING BROKE MY FALL...
BUT LISTEN... I ONLY WRECKED THIS BIT.
WRECK AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE... I DON'T CARE...
BUT THERE'S ONE BUILDING OVER THERE THAT LOOKS IN GOOD SHAPE!
ONLY ONE? I WAS EXPECTING THE PLACE TO BE SWARMING WITH WEIRDOES...
WELL DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT... IT MEANS LESS PEOPLE WE HAVE TO KILL...
YEAH, BUT HONEY... I LIKE KILLING PEOPLE!
LOOKS TO BE ONLY ONE DOOR... AND IT'S LOCKED...
NOT FOR LONG! JUST STAND ASIDE, MYSTA...
HOLD IT, AXEL... LET'S GO IN QUIETLY...
THERE'S A WINDOW UP THERE...
WAIT HERE. I'LL LET YOU IN...
BUT...

THIS AIN'T RIGHT SOMEHOW... IT OUGHTTA BE ME GOING IN THERE...
NAH, MYSTA CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF...
BUT HOLD ON... I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN THERE...
WHY'S IT TAKING SO LONG? IT COULD BE...
OH, HELL...!
WHAT IF THE PLACE IS FULL OF SQUAKKIN' VEGETABLES? I GOTTA GET IN THERE AND HELP!
THERE MIGHT BE TURNIPS!
GOD, I CAN'T STAND IT! WHAT IF SHE RUNS INTO SOME CURLY KALE? OR ARTICHOKES!
OH, NO! ASPARAGUS! YOU CAN'T TRUST ASPARAGUS! IT MIGHT BE FONDLING HER!
AND GHERKINS! IF GHERKINS GOT INTO HER MOUTH...
SQUAK! SHE'D PROBABLY EAT THEM!
AXEL...
MYSTA! YOU'RE OKAY!
'COURSE, I WASN'T WORRIED, BUT...
MYSTA?
ZIP!!

CONCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE!

IN ALIEN ENCOUNTERS #2—

The Monster of Planet Og!

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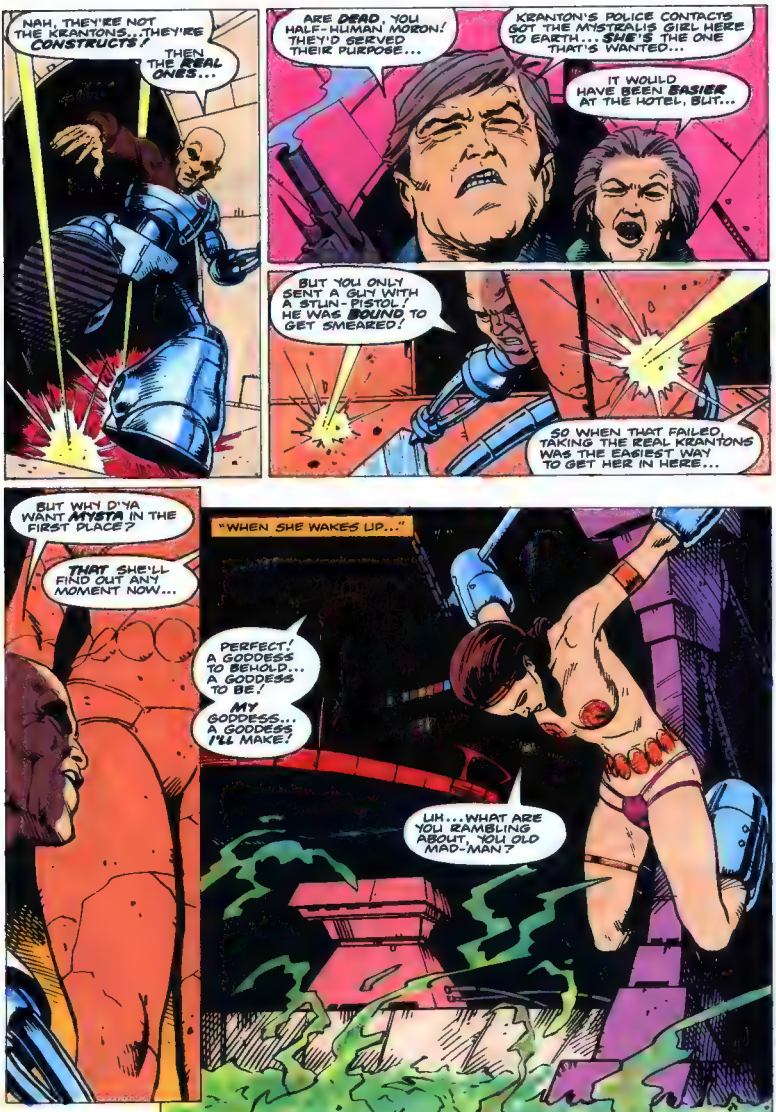
MYSTA!
SQUAK...
AXEL...
IT WAS ONLY A CONSTRUCT, AXEL...
YOU REALISE I COULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER CONSTRUCT...
WELL, HELL, SO LONG AS IT WAS YOU, MYSTA... I MEAN...

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN... BUT KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE JOB!
IF THESE LIFE-LEECHES DICK UP ON WHOEVER'S UPPERMOST IN OUR MINDS...
WE COULD RUN INTO OURSELVES AGAIN...!

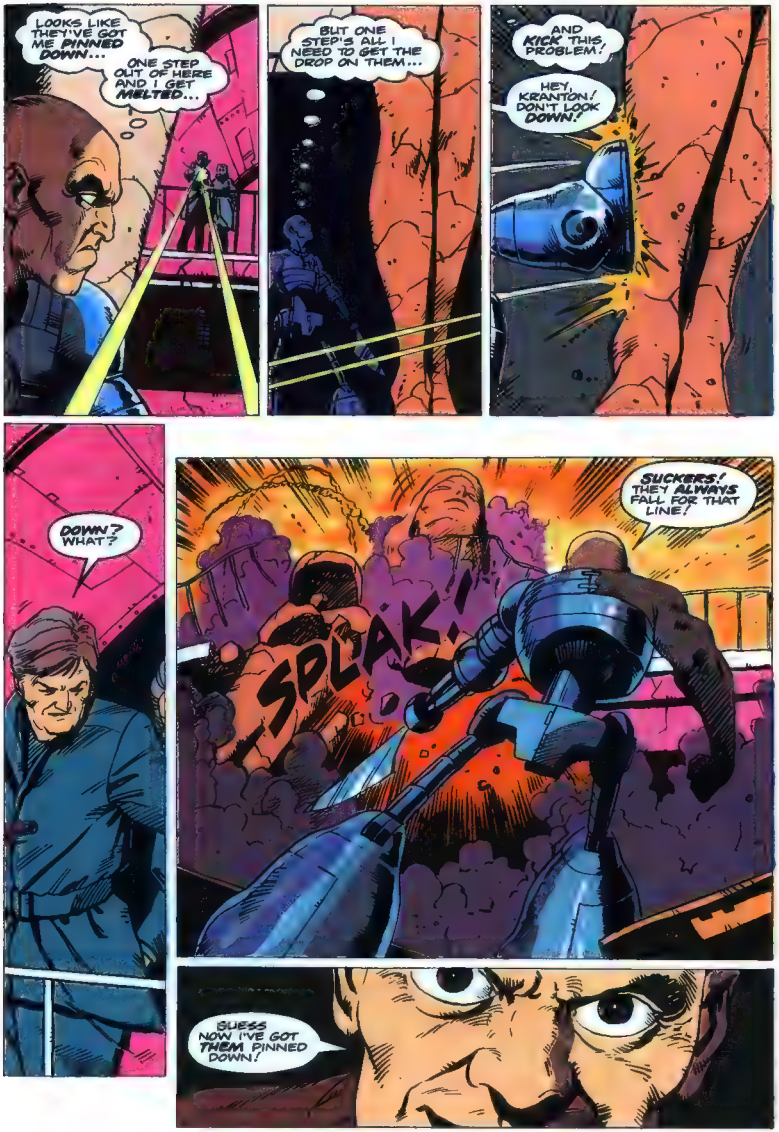
THIS COULD GET EMBARRASSING. IT KEEPS COMING UP YOU, MYSTA...
SO I'LL POLISH YOU FOR IT LATER...
BUT MY ONE...
GONF!
HASN'T MADE IT...!
HMM... MAYBE I SHOULD THINK ABOUT VEGETABLES INSTEAD! NAH... EVERYBODY KNOWS I WOULDN'T LET A VEGETABLE NEAR ME...
ESPECIALLY A TURNIP...
THE JOB, AXEL... THE JOB! LET ME SCAN THAT THING...
ZIISSTT
AND THEN YOU WON'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT ANYTHING AT ALL!
GOOD... I DON'T THINK I'M EVER GONNA GET USED TO WATCHING THAT!
COULD BE WORSE... YOU MIGHT HAVE TO CLEAVE ME...
SQUAKKIN' HELL!
IF THEY CAN TURN OUT LOADS OF DUPLICATES...
I'M JUST GOING TO HAVE TO SCAN YOU ALL THE TIME, MYSTA!
MAYBE YOU WON'T HAVE TO...
HAVE YOU NOTICED WHAT'S ROUND THE WALLS?

HUNDREDS OF CONSTRUCT-MECHANISMS... MUST BE THE MAIN STORE...
SO MAYBE WE CAN CANCEL A FEW THREATS' RIGHT NOW...!
SQUIT!
ZATT!
PHUT!
YEAH...
MAYBE WE CAN...
BUT I'M STILL GONNA CHECK...
COME ON, WE'VE GOT LOTS OF GROUND TO COVER...
I'LL TAKE THIS CORRIDOR... YOU GO THAT WAY...
AND YELL IF YOU RUN INTO TROUBLE...

TRUST ME TO GET THE ROUTE WHERE NOTHING HAPPENS! MYSTA WILL'VE KILLED EVERYBODY BY NOW!
HEY! KRANTON!


NAH, THEY'RE NOT THE KRANTONS...THEY'RE CONSTRUCTS!
THEN THE REAL ONES...
ARE DEAD, YOU HALF-HUMAN MORON! THEY'D SERVED THEIR PURPOSE...
KRANTON'S POLICE CONTACTS GOT THE MYSTRALIS GIRL HERE TO EARTH... SHE'S THE ONE THAT'S WANTED...
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER AT THE HOTEL, BUT...
BUT YOU ONLY SENT A GUY WITH A STUN-PISTOL! HE WAS BOUND TO GET SMEARED!
SO WHEN THAT FAILED, TAKING THE REAL KRANTONS WAS THE EASIEST WAY TO GET HER IN HERE...
BUT WHY D'YA WANT MYSTA IN THE FIRST PLACE?
THAT SHE'LL FIND OUT ANY MOMENT NOW...
"WHEN SHE WAKES UP..."
PERFECT! A GODDESS TO BEHOLD... A GODDESS TO BE!
MY GODDESS... A GODDESS I'LL MAKE!
UH...WHAT ARE YOU RAMBLING ABOUT, YOU OLD MAD-MAN?

MAD? ME?
DON'T YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO?
NO. I CAN'T SAY I REALLY CARE, EITHER...
AH, BUT YOU WILL! I AM ARKON FIERASTUS, LAST HIGH-PRIEST OF THE OLD GODDESS-CULT...
AND FIRST OF THE NEW! FIRST OF YOURS!
THERE ARE NO GODDESSES.
NOT ANY MORE PERHAPS... SO WE INVENTED ONE ROUND AN OLD ART TREASURE! BUT NOW...
NOW I'M GOING TO CREATE ONE!
SEE THIS? A POOL OF LIVING ELECTROPLASM...THE "POOL OF SOULS"...
THE PRIESTESSES WENT IN FIRST... EAGERLY...
THEN I SENT THE LIFE-LEECHES... TO SUCK THE SPIRIT FROM YOUNG WOMEN...
TO STORE THEM HERE...CONCENTRATED... WAITING, WAITING FOR YOU!
THE ESSENCE OF 11,664 BEINGS, ALL ALIVE AND EAGER FOR REBIRTH!
AND WHEN I LOWER YOU INTO THEM, ALL WILL BE ABSORBED!
THE SPIRIT, THE POWER, THE FEMININITY OF THEM ALL GUSHING THROUGH YOU... TRANSFORMING YOU...
YOU WILL BE A LIVING GODDESS! AND I... I WILL BE YOUR LOVER.
FAT CHANCE, WHIRP!
WHY ME, ANYWAY!?
IT COULD ONLY BE YOU! OF VIRGIN BIRTH... CONCEIVED WITHOUT A FATHER! RESURRECTED FROM DEATH...
YOU'RE HALF A GODDESS ALREADY!
I'M A CLONE, NOTHING MORE...
NOTHING MORE... YET... BUT ONCE YOU'RE IMMERSED...
THEN... WE SHALL SEE!


LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE GOT ME PINNED DOWN...
ONE STEP OUT OF HERE AND I GET MELTED...
BUT ONE STEP'S ALL I NEED TO GET THE DROP ON THEM...
AND KICK THIS PROBLEM!
HEY, KRANTON! DON'T LOOK DOWN!
DOWN? WHAT?
SPLAK!
SUCKERS! THEY ALWAYS FALL FOR THAT LINE!
GUESS NOW I'VE GOT THEM PINNED DOWN!

GOT TO GET MOVING AGAIN...
FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO...
MYSTA!
WHAT...?
FOOLISH OF YOU, YOU GROTESQUE MORON...
YOU SHOULD HAVE APPROACHED IN SILENCE...
YOU AIN'T GONNA HEAR ANYTHING ANYWAY, CREEP...
NOT WHEN I'VE SLICED YOUR EARS OFF!
HOW? YOU'VE ONLY GOT THAT PATHETIC CLEAVER...
AND IF I DON'T LET YOU GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO USE IT...
IT'S EASY TO MAKE YOU HARMLESS!
YOW!
YOU BASTARD!

AXEL?
FORGET HIM... FORGET EVERYTHING BUT WHAT IS SOON TO BE!
SOONER, BECAUSE JUST IN CASE...
WE'LL ACCELERATE THE IMMERSION!
YOU'LL REGRET THIS, FIRASTUS...
SOMEHOW... I'LL MAKE YOU REGRET THIS!
NONSENSE, GIRL!
ONCE THE POWER IS WITHIN YOU...THE SOUL-FORCE...
THE FIRST THING I'LL DO IS KILL YOU!
HA! YOU WON'T GET THE CHANCE!
TOO RIGHT. SHE WON'T, SQUAKHEAD!

YOU'RE GOING TO BE DEAD ALREADY!
REALLY DEAD!
DEAD IN SEVERAL PIECES!
SLASH!
AARRHK!!
STOP CUTTING HIM UP AND DO SOMETHING, AXEL!
TURN THE DAMNED MACHINERY OFF...
AND DON'T LET HIM FALL IN THE POOL!
K...K...
HIM? IT'S YOU I WANNA KEEP OUT OF THERE!
BLASTED BUTTONS! KNEW I SHOULD'VE ASKED ABOUT 'EM BEFORE I CUT HIS THROAT!
STILL... TOO LATE FOR QUESTIONS NOW!
URRRHH!
SZZZ!

TOO LATE FOR ANYTHING, AXEL... UNLESS IT'S RIGHT NOW!
CAN'T FIND THE RIGHT BUTTON TO PRESS! CAN ALWAYS FIND MINE OKAY, BUT...
HELL, THERE'S NO TIME...
UNLESS...
IT'S HACKING TIME!
SNORKS!
ZZZZ...!
HOO, WHAT A BUZZ! I'M BEGINNING TO LIKE ELECTRICITY!
AXEL!
HEY, MYSTA... IT STOPPED! YOU'RE OKAY...!
JUST... BUT I'VE STILL GOT MY FACE IN THIS GLOP!
GET ME DOWN, HUH?
THERE YOU GO... LEAN ON ME...
HELL NO, LET ME GET MY STUFF...
IF FIRASTUS IS STILL ALIVE IN THERE...
THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT ALL THAT SOUL-POWER'LL DO TO HIM!
HEY, HE'S COMING OUT!
BUT I SLICED 'IM UP NEAT AND CLEAN!
THAT'S WHAT DIVINITY DOES FOR YOU, AXEL...
AND THIS IS WHAT WE DO FOR DIVINITY!

NOW, RUN FOR IT! NOTHING MORE WE CAN DO...

" BUT HEAD FOR THE AIR-CAR...

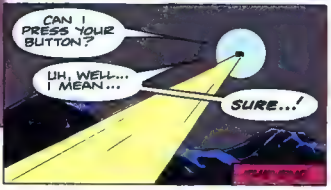
" AND GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!"
UH, YEAH, BUT MYSTA... JUST WHAT WAS IT YOU MADE HIM EAT BACK THERE?

GA-SHOOM!
POCKET NUKE.
OH.

HUH, WELL THIS IS A WRITE-OFF! HAVE TO GET THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY REPLACED...
STILL, WE CAN AFFORD IT...
JUST ABOUT, AXEL... WITH THE KRANTONS DEAD...

NOBODY PAYS US...
AH, WHAT THE HELL...
SOMETHING'S BEEN EATING ME... BACK WHEN THOSE CONSTRUCTS WERE WORKING UP INTO OUR FAVOURITE PEOPLE...

MINE CAME UP AS YOU OKAY... BUT HOW COME YOURS BURNT OUT?
GUESS IT JUST COULDN'T HANDLE YOUR METALLIC BODY, AXEL...


CAN I PRESS YOUR BUTTON?
UH, WELL... I MEAN...
SURE...!

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